



Smallpox Brief: Feb 27, 2003

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

**Topic: CALIFORNIA HEALTH DIRECTOR JOINS LOCAL HEALTHCARE
WORKERS TO RECEIVE SMALLPOX VACCINE**

State Health Director Diana M. Bontá, R.N., Dr.P.H., joined San Mateo County Health Officer Dr. Scott Morrow and other San Mateo County healthcare workers today to become the first in the county to be vaccinated for smallpox. These voluntary vaccinations are part of California's ongoing efforts to protect the public from the potential threat of smallpox being used as a weapon of terror.

"I commend these individuals standing with me today, as well as the thousands of other healthcare workers throughout California, who will be volunteering to be vaccinated in the spirit of public service," Bontá said.

A number of local health departments throughout the state also began this week vaccinating healthcare workers who volunteered to be members of smallpox response teams. These teams will be responsible for providing medical care, disease investigation and vaccinating additional health care workers in the event of a smallpox outbreak. As the smallpox vaccination program expands statewide, additional health departments are expected to begin vaccinations in the coming weeks.

California requested and received a total of 10,000 doses of smallpox vaccine from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Smallpox vaccinations will be offered to healthcare workers on a strictly voluntary basis. CDHS has conducted training sessions throughout the state with vaccinators and healthcare workers to educate them about the smallpox virus as well as the smallpox vaccine and its associated health risks. Because of its risks, smallpox vaccination is not recommended for the general public at this time.

For more information about smallpox in English and Spanish, please visit <http://www.dhs.ca.gov/smallpox>, or call the Governor's Office of Emergency Services Safety Information and Referral Line at (800) 550-5234.

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